

ELECTRONIC GAMING MACHINE

FIELD OF INVENTION

5 [0001] The embodiments of the present invention relate generally to an electronically implemented gaming machine. More particularly, a slot machine incorporating a primary game and a secondary or bonus game.

BACKGROUND

10 [0002] Gaming machines are increasingly responsible for the bulk of revenues generated by casinos and other gaming establishments. Over time, electronic gaming machines, including slot machines, have systematically replaced table games as the most popular form of gaming in casinos. As a result, casino operators have a continuous desire for new games facilitated by electronic gaming machines.

15 [0003] One recently developed successful feature of slot machines is the secondary or bonus game. Secondary games are in electrical communication with a slot machine primary game and is actuated upon certain preestablished primary game outcomes. The primary game outcome is conventionally determined by a series of reels of the slot machine. The reels may be either mechanical or simulated in a video format. The reels incorporate gaming indicia which, along with one or more paylines, define the
20 primary game outcomes.

25 [0004] One example of a popular slot machine incorporating a primary and secondary game is the popular Wheel of Fortune® slot machine. The Wheel of Fortune® slot machine includes a primary game comprising mechanical reels and a secondary game facilitated by a rotatable wheel analogous to the "wheel" associated with the game show of the same name. The secondary game is activated in response to a specific preestablished primary game outcome. In practice the specific primary game outcome occurs when the third reel payline of the primary game intersects a "spin the wheel" indicia. In fact, only the third reel includes a "spin the wheel" indicia. After the "spin the wheel" indicia appears, the player depresses a "spin the wheel" button

causing the mechanical secondary wheel to spin thereby resulting in random secondary award.

5 [0005] Secondary games have become very popular because players enjoy the excitement and the extra opportunity to win an additional award. Moreover, the secondary games are conventionally programed to result in a winning outcome on each activation. Thus, secondary games based on new and exciting themes are in constant demand.

10 [0006] Accordingly, the embodiments of the present invention are facilitated by an electronic gaming machine incorporating a primary game and a secondary game. The secondary game can be implemented in either a mechanical or video form.

SUMMARY

15 [0007] The embodiments of the present invention incorporate a secondary game having a mechanical blender apparatus or a video depiction thereof. While the blender is preferred, it can also be replaced or associated with a drink shaker, beer mug or other bar related item. The blender apparatus or video blender holds ice cubes which display values or other symbols related to an actual secondary award amount or a multiplier award. Upon activation of the secondary game, the blender is actuated thereby causing the ice cubes to agitate within the blender. Within a preestablished time period, one or more of the ice cubes are randomly captured and isolated for determining the amount of the secondary award.

20 [0008] In a mechanical format, the blender apparatus is generally in the form of a conventional blender albeit larger to hold a significant number of simulated ice cubes and to attract players to the slot machines incorporating the same. Upon a preestablished primary game outcome (e.g., a primary game payline intersects an ice cube gaming indicia on the third reel) the blender becomes active. The blender can be automatically actuated upon the preestablished primary game outcome or the gaming machine may incorporate a means for the player to cause the blender to actuate.

25 [0009] In a first embodiment, the simulated ice cubes are formed of a lightweight transparent material to resemble the appearance of real ice cubes. An air source in

communication with the blender agitates the simulated ice cubes within the blender. A transparent cap extending vertically from a blender top captures one or more agitating simulated ice cubes.

5 [0010] To increase the excitement level of the mechanical blender, a speaker incorporated within the gaming machine may be activated to output a sound recording of a blender motor and blender blades acting upon ice cubes.

10 [0011] In another embodiment, a video display in communication with the primary game displays a simulated blender and simulated ice cubes or simulated crushed ice having numerals or symbols depicted thereon. As described below, the video embodiment provides much more versatility than the mechanical embodiment as the video display can show any prerecorded material, including animation, desired. However, the ice cubes and corresponding values or symbols depicted thereon effectuate the same objective as the mechanical embodiment - that is, determining a secondary award.

15 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] Fig. 1 shows a video embodiment of the present invention;

[0013] Fig. 2 shows a mechanical embodiment of the present invention;

20 [0014] Fig. 3 shows a close-up view of a blender lid and communicating vacuum tube; and

[0015] Fig. 4 shows a proposed pay table.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

25 [0016] The operation of electronic gaming machines, more particularly slot machines, is well-known in the industry so that the minute details are not set forth herein. In general terms, a slot machine is controlled by a processor including, or in communication with, a random number generator. The random number generator generates the machine outcomes. Gaming indicia on mechanical or video reels and one or more pay lines determine random game outcomes.

[0017] Reference is now made to the figures wherein like parts are referred to by like numerals throughout. Fig. 1 illustrates a perspective view of an electronic gaming machine, generally denoted by reference numeral 100, for facilitating the embodiments of the present invention. The machine incorporates a primary reel game and a secondary video game. As shown, three mechanical reels 110-1 through 110-3 enable the primary game. While only three mechanical reels 110-1 through 110-3 are shown, more or less than three reels may be used to enable the primary game. For example, two or five reels may be used. In addition, the reels 110-1 through 110-3 may be provided in a video format rather than a mechanical format.

[0018] The three reels 110-1 through 110-3 include gaming indicia 115-1 through 115-3 thereon. Upon activation, the three reels 110-1 through 110-3 spin until each reel from left to right are stopped by the machine processor at preestablished positions. A pay line 117 defines winning outcomes. While only a single pay line 117 is shown, multiple pay lines, including diagonal pay lines, may be incorporated. Based on the alignment of the gaming indicia 115-1 through 115-3 along the pay line 117 the processor determines a player's winnings, if any. A proposed pay table illustrating gaming indicia 105 and associated pay outs 115 is shown in Fig. 4. As shown, three Happy Hour indicia 125 activate the secondary game. It is noted that the gaming indicia are only exemplary and may take any designs desired. In addition, alternative primary game outcomes may be used to activate the secondary game. Moreover, the primary game does not have to be a slot machine but may be any type of gaming machine, including video poker, video keno, etc.

[0019] The machine 100 includes several player buttons which act as interfaces between the player and the machine processor. Player buttons include a spin button 120, a change button 130, a play maximum credits button 140 and a secondary game actuation button 150. Instead of the spin button 120, a player may activate the machine 100 by means of an arm 135 (i.e., handle). Each of the player buttons and the arm 125 are in electrical communication with the processor such the player may control the operations of the machine 100. A player interface may also be implemented through a touchscreen system.

[0020] The machine 100 also incorporates a coin acceptor 160 and a credit display 170. While not shown, the machine 100 may also incorporate a bill validator. Players may insert coins or bills depending on the specific player's preference. The credit display 170 allows players to play on credit such that any gaming winnings or loses are immediately depicted in the display 170. Once a playing session ends, the player may cash out for any monies owed. While not shown, the machine 100 may also incorporate a ticket dispenser for printing tickets for redemption at a cashier window. Such cashless systems are becoming increasingly popular in gaming jurisdictions.

[0021] In one embodiment, a secondary game comprises a video display 200 and is activated by certain preestablished primary game outcomes. For example, if a preestablished gaming indicia of the third reel 110-3 aligns with the pay line 117, the secondary game is eligible for play. Ideally, the secondary game is actuated by the player depressing the secondary game actuation button 150. Players will appreciate the ability to actuate the secondary game. In addition, players often believe in superstitions that can be exercised by deciding the exact time or method of depressing the secondary game actuation button 150. Alternatively, the secondary game may be actuated automatically by the processor in response to a preestablished primary game outcome.

[0022] Participation in the secondary game may also be a function of the number of coins played. For example, the machine 100 may allow players to play one to three coins. Therefore, to participate in a secondary game the player may be required to play three coins. Should the player play only one to two coins and receive the preestablished primary game outcome, the player is only eligible for the primary game award. Such an arrangement encourages the play of maximum number of coins.

[0023] In a video embodiment, the secondary game comprises a simulated or video depiction of a blender 210 containing ice cubes 220-1 through 220-N. The ice cubes can also be replaced by, or accompanied by, crushed ice. Each ice cube 220-1 through 220-N has a value 230 or symbol depicted thereon. The value 230 or symbol is used to identify a bonus award or a multiplier. Once actuated, the video display 200 shows an animated bartender behind a bar ready to serve a customer. The video

display 200 then shows a customer walk to the bar. The customer is intended to represent the player. The bartender then uses an ice scoop to place ice cubes 220-1 through 220-N into the blender 210. Once the ice cubes 220-1 through 220-N are placed into the blender 210, the bartender places a lid 240 on the blender 210 and presses a button to start the blender 210. The video display 200 then pans in to show a close-up view of the blender 210 and the ice cubes 220-1 through 220-N being agitated therein. The agitation of the ice cubes 220-1 through 220-N creates a high level of excitement as the player observes the different numbers 230 being randomly agitated and anticipates the ultimate award. As the blender 210 speed increases, the ice cubes 220-1 through 220-N rise to the top of the blender 210. At some preestablished point in time, the lid 240 is shown to partially dislodge permitting one or more of the ice cubes 220-1 through 220-N to be ejected from the blender 210. The ejected ice cube 220-E is shown sliding down the length of the bar. The value 230-E or symbol depicted on ejected ice cube 220-E defines the bonus award or multiplier. Alternatively, crushed ice may flow out of the blender 210 and a number corresponding to a bonus award or multiplier is displayed.

[0024] If the ice cube 220-E acts a bonus award, the value 230-E depicted thereon corresponds to the secondary award. The bonus award is then summed to itself for each coin played (i.e., multiplied by the number of coins played). The secondary award is then applied to the credit display 170 or paid out in coins. Alternatively, the ejected ice cube 220-E may include a value 230-E in combination with an "X" symbol. The "X" symbol represents the multiplication symbol. Thus, an ice cube depicting "3X" signifies that the primary game award is multiplied by three.

[0025] In one embodiment, the secondary game is activated by a single preestablished gaming indicia on the third reel 110-3. In this embodiment, the ice cube 220-E acts as a bonus award when the preestablished gaming indicia 115-3 of the third reel 110-3 aligns with the pay line 117 and the gaming indicia 115-1, 115-2 of the first and second reels 110-1, 110-2 do not match one another. If gaming indicia 115-1, 115-2 of the first and second reels 110-1, 110-2 do match one another and the preestablished gaming indicia 115-3 of the third reel 110-3 aligns with the pay line 117,

the ice cube 220-E acts as a multiplier. The processor, based on the primary game outcome, will determine which ice cubes (e.g. bonus or multiplier) are shown on the video display.

[0026] In another embodiment, a single identical preestablished gaming indicia is on each reel 110-1 through 110-3. A bonus award is paid when the identical preestablished gaming indicia of the first and second reels 110-1, 110-2 align with pay line 117. If only the preestablished gaming indicia of the third reel 110-3 aligns with the pay line 117, the primary game award is multiplied. If the preestablished gaming indicia of the first and second reels 110-1, 110-2 align with the pay line 117, two ice cubes are ejected from the blender and their sum is added together to derive the bonus award. If the preestablished gaming indicia of the first reel 110-1 or the second reel 110-2 and the third reel 110-3 align with the pay line 117, two ice cubes are ejected from the blender with the first acting as a bonus award and the second being a multiplier. Therefore, the bonus award is multiplied by the multiplier to derive the total bonus award. Should the preestablished gaming indicia of the first reel 110-1, the second reel 110-2 and the third reel 110-3 align with the pay line 117, three ice cubes are ejected. The first and second ice cubes are summed to obtain the bonus award which is then multiplied by the value of the third ice cube to derive the total bonus award. In other words, the first two reels 110-1 and 110-2 act as bonus reels and the third reel 110-3 acts as a multiplier reel.

[0027] To increase the excitement level of the embodiments of the present invention, the gaming machine 100 further incorporates one or more speakers for outputting certain audible noises corresponding to the activation of an actual mechanical blender. By way of example, when the bartender uses the ice scoop to place ice cubes into the blender 210, the one or more speakers will output corresponding sounds. Similarly, the speakers may output blender 210 sounds when appropriate.

[0028] Now referring to Fig. 2, the secondary game is implemented in a physical embodiment. A transparent blender 400, blender lid 410 and award indicators 420-1 through 420-N comprise the physical embodiment of the secondary game. The blender 400 communicates with the machine processor. In addition, the blender 400

communicates with an air supply via tube 415. Lightweight, generally square, bonus or multiplier indicators 420-1 through 420-N are contained within the blender 400. The indicators 420-1 through 420-N have the general appearance of ice cubes. As with the video embodiment, the indicators 420-1 through 420-N depict certain values 430 or symbols corresponding to a bonus award or multiplier.

[0029] In response to preestablished primary game outcomes, the indicators 420-1 through 420-N are agitated by the air supply such that the indicators 420-1 through 420-N randomly circulate within the blender 400. Internally, a blower (not shown) is activated and sends a continuous stream of air to the blender 400. At a preestablished time, a second tube 440 in communication with the lid cap 410 vacuums air from within the blender 400 causing the lid cap 410 and tube 440 to capture one or more indicators 420-C. Internally, a vacuum (not shown) is activated and withdraws air, and therewith one or more indicators 420-1 through 420-N, from within the blender 400. The indicators 420-C depict the bonus award or multiplier.

[0030] Now referring to Fig. 3, the second tube 440 also incorporates one or more spring biased and rotatable levers 500-1 through 500-3 designed to permit the tube 440 to capture a preestablished number of indicators 420-1 through 420-N. The levers 500-1 through 500-3 are circular in nature, similar to the tube 440, and sized so that they restrain a captured indicator. To allow air to be withdrawn from the blender 400, each lever 500-1 through 500-3 is fabricated of a mesh material or similar material which allows air to pass therethrough (i.e., similar to a head of a tennis racket).

[0031] Each lever 500-1 through 500-3 is in electrical communication with the processor and controlled by the processor. During non-use, the levers 500-1 through 500-3 are locked into their generally horizontal position. However, should the outcome of the primary game determine that three indicators 420-1 through 420-3 are to be captured, the processor unlocks levers 500-1 and 500-2 to permit them to freely rotate upwardly when contacted by a captured indicator 420-2 and 420-3. Once an indicator passes a lever, the lever automatically returns to its generally horizontal and locked position. In this fashion, the three captured indicators 420-1 through 420-3 are in a stacked arrangement. Once the three indicators 420-1 through 420-3 have been

captured and the corresponding award determined and recorded, the processor stops the blower and vacuum and unlocks the levers 500-1 and 500-2 so that they freely rotate downwardly to allow the captured indicators 420-2 and 420-3 to be released back into the blender 400. Indicator 420-1, which is restrained within the lid cap 410, is held in place by the vacuum and releases into the blender 400 when the vacuum is stopped. An air porous wall 510 serves as an upper limit for captured indicators.

[0032] Capturing multiple indicators provides an ideal situation for creating large jackpots. For example, mixed along with the numbered indicators there may be three differently colored indicators (e.g., red, white and blue). Should the three colored indicators be captured in a preestablished order (e.g., first red, then white, then blue), the player wins a large jackpot based on the low probability of such an occurrence. The variations on the methods of creating a large jackpot are infinite.

[0033] In the mechanical embodiment, the processor must be able to determine the value or symbol depicted on the captured indicator 420-C. In a first embodiment, each indicator 420 includes a readable bar code that is scanned as the indicator is captured by the lid 410. The scanned bar code includes the value 430 or symbol depicted on the captured indicator 420 so that the value 430 or symbol is transmitted to the processor. In an alternative embodiment, a video camera directed at the lid cap 450 may capture and recognize the value or symbol of the indicator 420-C and transmit the same to the processor. Alternatively, electrical contacts incorporated on the indicators 420-1 through 420-N mate with corresponding electrical contacts on an upper surface of the lid cap 450. The value or symbol of the indicator 420-C is then transmitted via the electrical contacts to the processor. Any means for determining and transmitting the value or symbol of the indicators 420-C can be used.

[0034] In either the video or mechanical embodiment, players are provided with a mechanism for controlling the speed of the blender 210 and 400, respectively. Thus, in a video embodiment, players are provided with physical buttons on the gaming machine 100 or touchscreen technology provides simulated buttons on the video display 200 which permit the player to select the speed (e.g., low, medium or high) of the blender 210. Based on the player selection, the processor in communication with

the video display 200 causes the simulated or video blender 210 to operate accordingly. Similarly, in the mechanical embodiment, physical gaming machine buttons provide a means for the player to select the blender 400 speed. The physical buttons may illuminate at the appropriate time to alert players that they may select the speed of the blender 210 and 400. In the video embodiment, an appropriate indication of the display 200 may also be used to alert the player of the need or option to select a blender 210 speed.

[0035] Another feature of the embodiments of the present invention is the player's ability to discard a first secondary game award in an attempt to improve the secondary award. In one embodiment, subsequent to the determination of a first secondary game award, the player is provided the option to throw away the award and re-play the secondary game a second time. In practice, and in keeping with the theme of the game, the player may be given the opportunity to "Re-Blend." In so doing, the captured indicators 420-1 through 420-N are released back into the blender 210 and 400. Once released, the blender 210 and 400 re-circulates all indicators 410-1 through 420-N and three new indicators are captured. Based on the newly captured indicators, the player is provided an award. Therefore, players may increase or possibly decrease their first award. Players may also be given more than two opportunities to re-play the secondary game.

[0036] Even though the embodiments of the present invention have been described as a secondary game, they may also be implemented as a primary game without the need for being dependent on the outcomes of another game.

[0037] Although the invention has been described in detail with reference to a preferred embodiment, additional variations and modifications exist within the scope and spirit of the invention as described and defined in the following claims.